

THE TRUE STORY OF ODYSSEUS, ONCE KING OF ITHACA
- BY HIMSELF -

----- BOOK 7 -----
IN THE UNDERWORLD



Panko





THE TRUE STORY
OF ODYSSEUS
ONCE KING OF ITHACA
- BY HIMSELF -

BOOK 1	.....	THE EVENTS IN TROY
BOOK 2	.....	IN THE LAND OF LOTUS-EATERS
BOOK 3	.....	ON THE ISLAND OF THE CYCLOPS
BOOK 4	.....	THE FLOATING ISLAND OF AEOLUS
BOOK 5	.....	IN THE LAND OF THE LAESTRYGONIANS
BOOK 6	.....	ON THE ISLAND OF CIRCE
BOOK 7	.....	IN THE UNDERWORLD
BOOK 8	.....	ON THE ISLAND OF THE SIRENS
BOOK 9	.....	SCYLLA AND CHARYBDE
BOOK 10	.....	ON THE ISLAND OF HELIOS
BOOK 11	.....	ON THE ISLAND OF CALYPSO
BOOK 12	ON THE ISLAND OF THE PHAECIANS
BOOK 13	THE RETURN TO ITHACA
BOOK 14	HELEN

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ΗΕΡΙ ΚΑΙ ΝΕΦΕΛΗ ΚΕΚΑΛΥΜΜΕΝΟΙ ΟΥΔΕ ΠΟΤ' ΑΥΤΟΥΣ
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Homer, "The Odyssey", xi 14-19

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P.O. Box 26 Hydra 18040
Greece

email: panflynn@otenet.gr

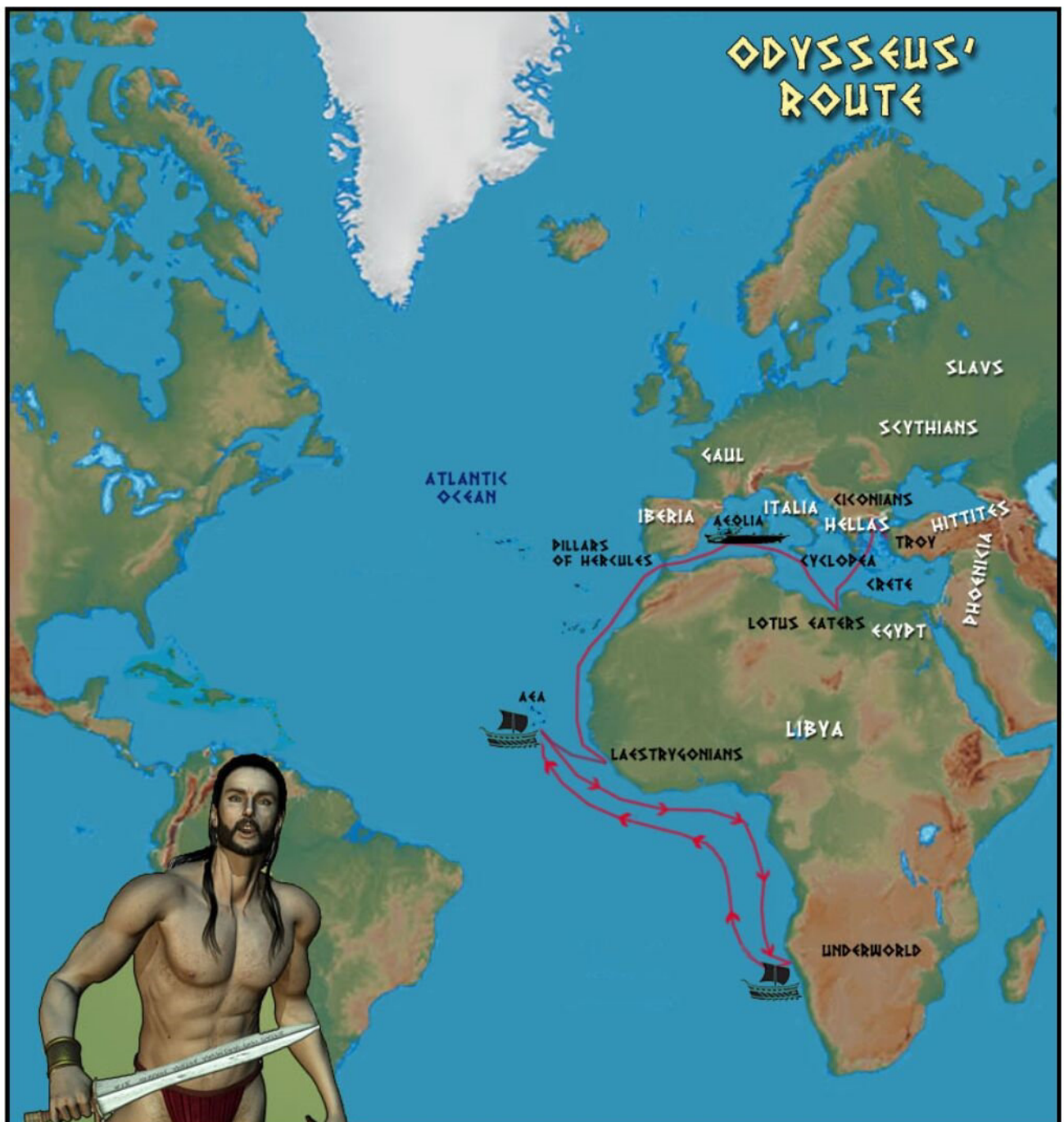


BOOK 7 IN THE UNDERWORLD



THE YEAR SPENT IN THE ISLAND OF CIRCE HAS BEEN EXTREMELY EDUCATIONAL. APART FROM CONSIDERABLY IMPROVING MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE GODS, I ALSO LEARNED THAT A SILENT COLD WAR WAS RAGING AMONG THE RANKS OF THESE BEINGS THAT HUMANS BELIEVED TO BE OF DIVINE STOCK. A WAR FOR POWER AND SUPREMACY IN WHICH THEY WOULDN'T HESITATE TO INVOLVE MANKIND, IF IT SUITED THEIR PURPOSE -HENCE MY PRESENT MISSION TO THE REGION CALLED "THE UNDERWORLD".

WE'D BEEN SAILING DUE SOUTH, PUSHED BY A STEADY NORTH WIND. THE CREW KNEW NOTHING ABOUT MY MISSION NOR OF OUR DESTINATION. HAMON ALONE KNEW WHERE WE WERE HEADING, AND THOUGH HE HAD SAILED IN THESE WATERS BEFORE ABOARD PHOENICIAN MERCHANT SHIPS, HE WASN'T EXACTLY THRILLED BY THE PROSPECT OF THIS VOYAGE.



WE'D BEEN AT SEA FOR OVER A MONTH, KEEPING AS CLOSE TO THE COAST AS POSSIBLE AND GOING ASHORE ONLY TO REPLENISH OUR RESERVES OF WATER AND FRUITS WHILE AVOIDING THE SPOTS THAT APPEARED TO BE INHABITED.



DURING THIS TIME WE WERE SURVEYED BY AIRCRAFT OF THE GODS AT LEAST ONCE EVERY DAY.



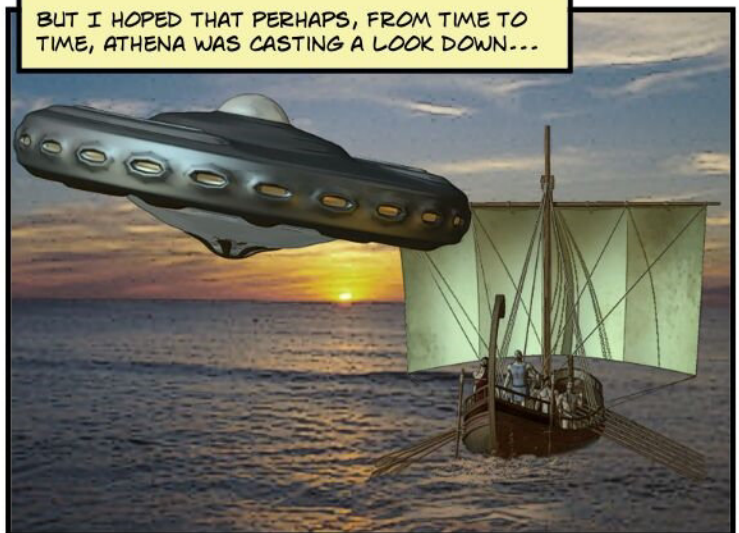
IT LOOKED AS IF THEY WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT WE WERE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.



WHO WAS FLYING THEM?
THERE WAS NO WAY TO KNOW.



BUT I HOPED THAT PERHAPS, FROM TIME TO TIME, ATHENA WAS CASTING A LOOK DOWN...



THE FURTHER SOUTH WE WENT THE HOTTER IT BECAME. WE COULD SEE THE WATER AROUND OUR SHIP EVAPORATING AT MIDDAY.



WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US?

WE ARE HEADING STRAIGHT TO HELL!



FOR ONCE YOU ARE CORRECT.



THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN, THE FLYING SHIELDS OF THE GODS STOPPED COMING AND I KNEW THAT WE WERE ENTERING THE DOMAIN OF HADES.



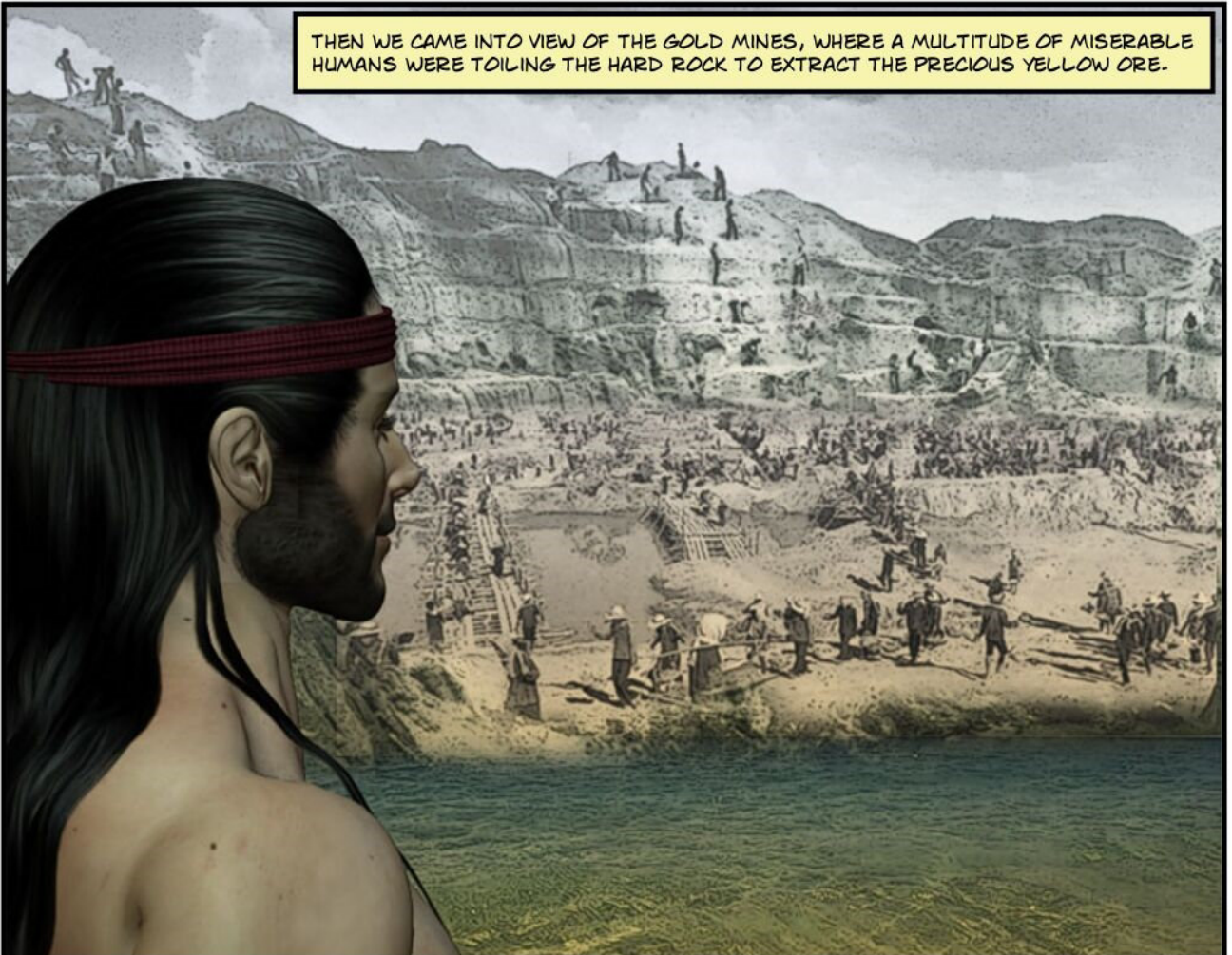
WE'LL SOON BE THERE. LOOK HOW THE SCENERY ON THE COAST HAS CHANGED.



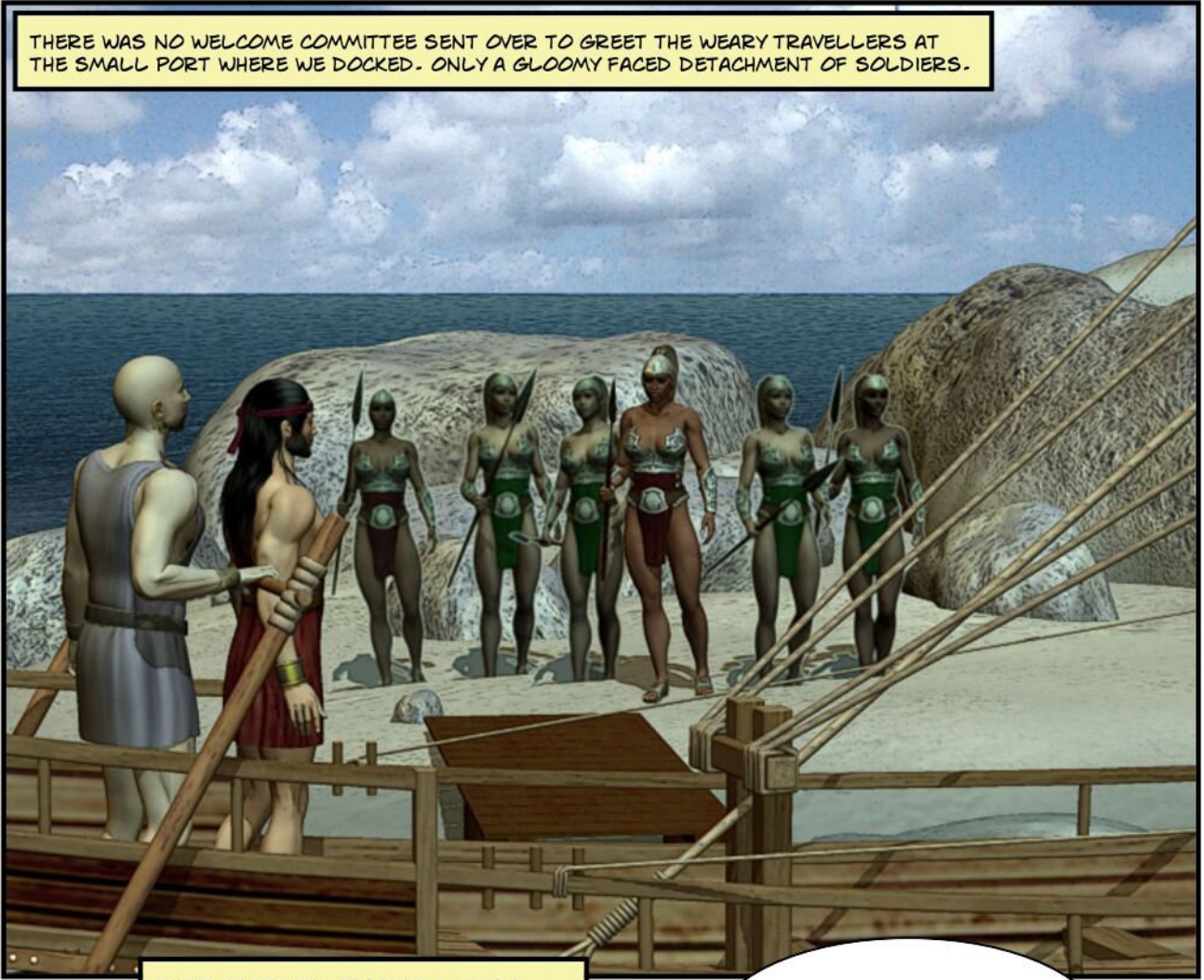
HE WAS RIGHT. THE SOIL BECAME BARREN AND DESOLATE, AS IF IT HAS BEEN CURSED AND THE DESERT STRETCHED AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE.



THEN WE CAME INTO VIEW OF THE GOLD MINES, WHERE A MULTITUDE OF MISERABLE HUMANS WERE TOILING THE HARD ROCK TO EXTRACT THE PRECIOUS YELLOW ORE.



THERE WAS NO WELCOME COMMITTEE SENT OVER TO GREET THE WEARY TRAVELLERS AT THE SMALL PORT WHERE WE DOCKED. ONLY A GLOOMY FACED DETACHMENT OF SOLDIERS.



THEIR CHIEF, AN IMPOSING AMAZON, WASN'T IN A HOSPITABLE MOOD EITHER.



YOU CAN'T DOCK HERE. KEEP GOING.



OH, PLEASE! WE ARE SEA BEATEN AND WE LOST OUR WAY. LET US STAY, JUST TO REPLENISH OUR PROVISIONS.

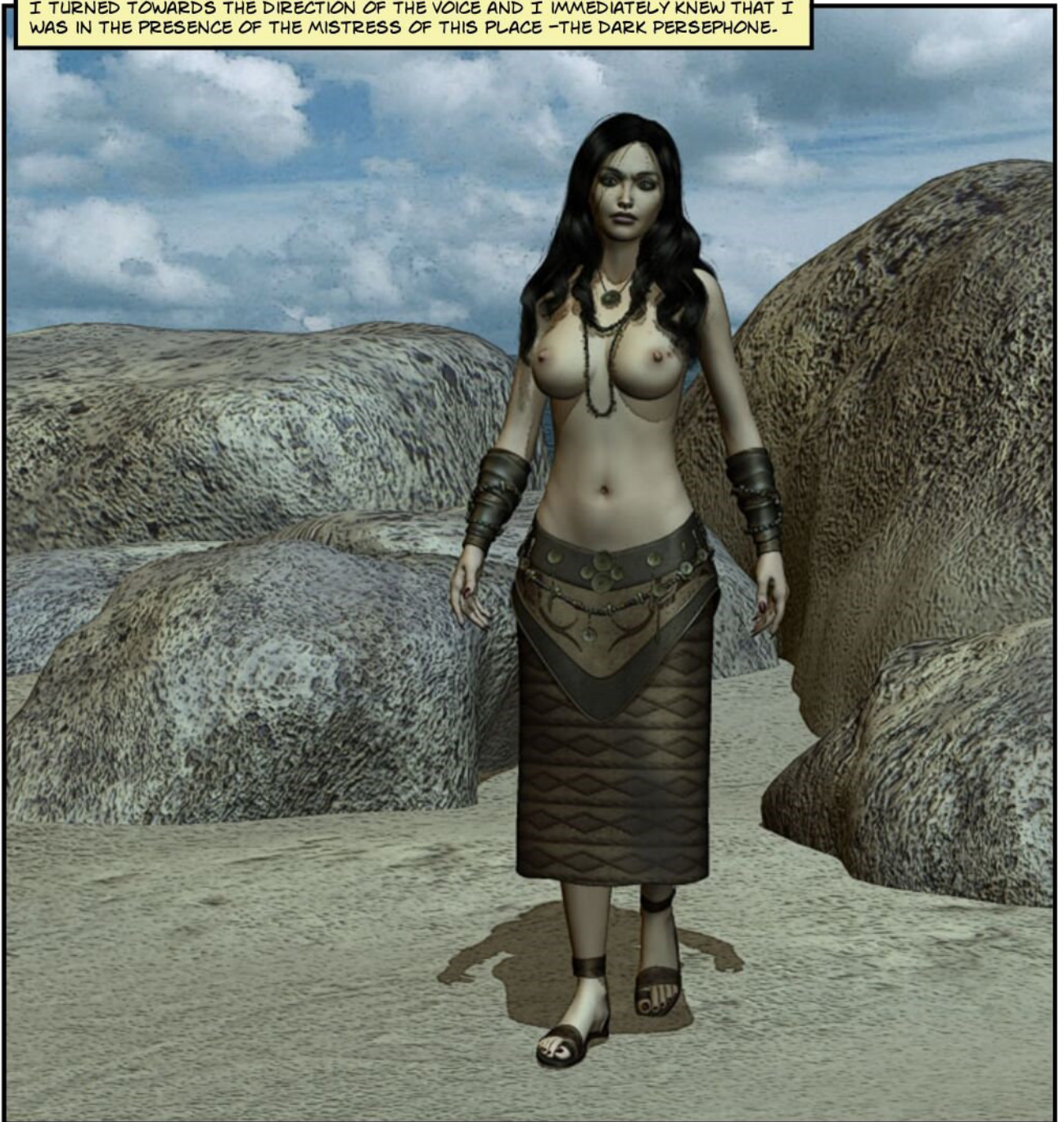


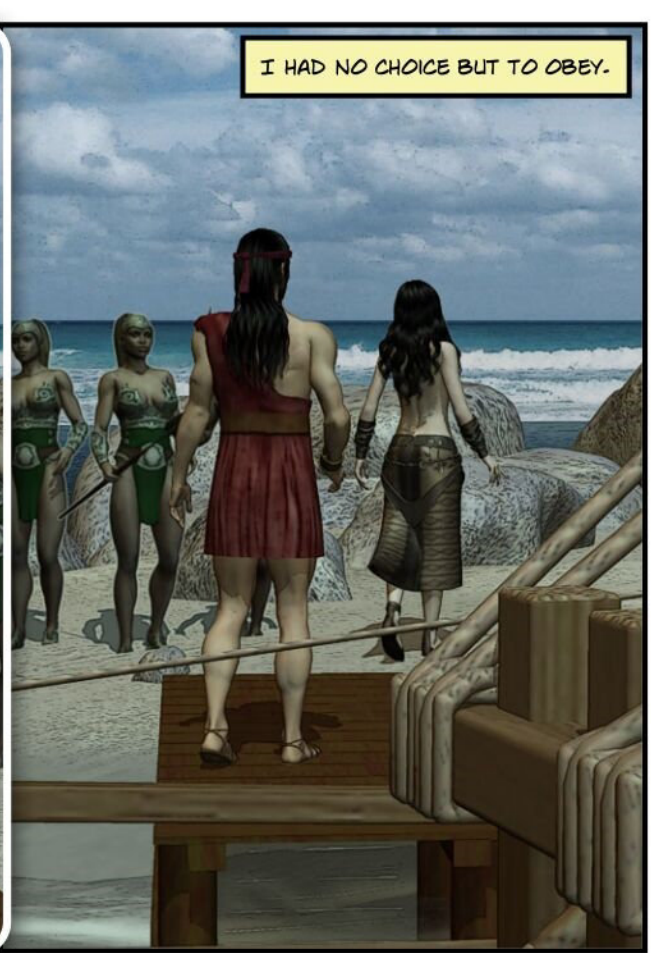
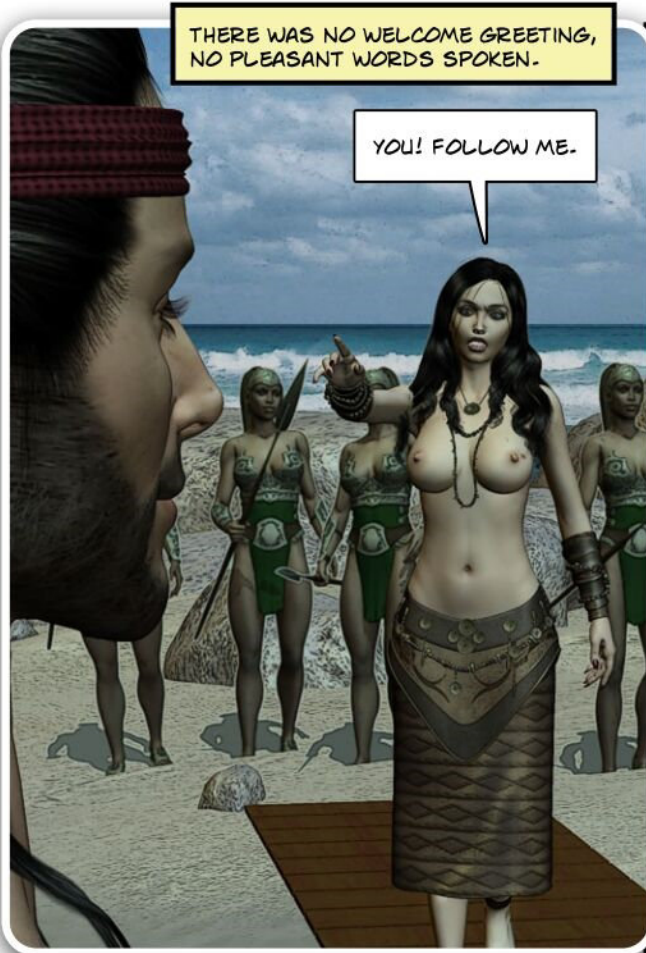
NO WAY! GET
BACK TO YOUR
DARS AND KEEP
GOING.

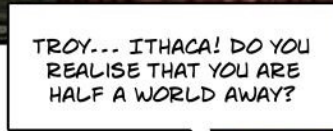


NOT SO FAST,
PERITHEA.

I TURNED TOWARDS THE DIRECTION OF THE VOICE AND I IMMEDIATELY KNEW THAT I WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MISTRESS OF THIS PLACE -THE DARK PERSEPHONE.







SHE RELUCTANTLY OFFERED ME A CUP OF COOL WINE AND I APPLIED MYSELF TO CONCOCTING THE TALE OF MY ADVENTURES, WHICH, WHILST BASED ON REALITY, WERE DOCTORED IN A WAY THAT LEFT OUT ANY PASSAGES THAT MIGHT AROUSE HER SUSPICIONS.



NOT ONCE DID SHE SMILE, NOT ONCE DID SHE UTTER A WORD OF SYMPATHY. SHE JUST SAT THERE, LISTENING, GLOOMY AND MOROSE, LIKE THE UNDERWORLD OF LEGEND ITSELF, OVER WHICH SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO PRESIDE.



YOU MUST BE A LOUSY MARINER TO LOSE YOUR WAY SO MANY TIMES!



I'M NO MARINER, MY LADY. JUST AN ORDINARY WARRIOR WHO KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT THE ROUTES OF THE SEA.



YES, I'VE HEARD OF YOU. AREN'T YOU THE ONE THEY CALL "CRAFTY"?



IT IS TRUE THAT SOME PEOPLE CHOSE TO CALL ME BY THIS NAME, MY LADY.



YOU DON'T LOOK ALL THAT CRAFTY TO ME, ENDING UP AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT.



A MAN CANNOT CONTROL HIS FATE, MY LADY. ONLY THE GODS DO THAT.



HA! THE "GODS"! RIGHT. AND WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?





JUST YOUR PERMISSION TO STAY HERE FOR A WHILE, TILL MY CREW IS RESTED AND OUR PROVISIONS REPLENISHED.



DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE?

I'VE NO IDEA, MY LADY. SOMEWHERE IN THE SOUTH OF LIBYA?



DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

OH, YES. YOU ARE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PICTURE THAT MY EYES HAVE CHANCED TO ADMIRE FOR A LONG, LONG TIME.



SHE HALF-SMILED FOR THE FIRST TIME.

YOU HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS, HUMAN, BUT YOUR FLATTERY IS LOST ON ME. HOWEVER, I'M GRANTING YOU PERMISSION TO STAY HERE FOR A WHILE. AND NOW GET OUT -I'M DONE WITH YOU.



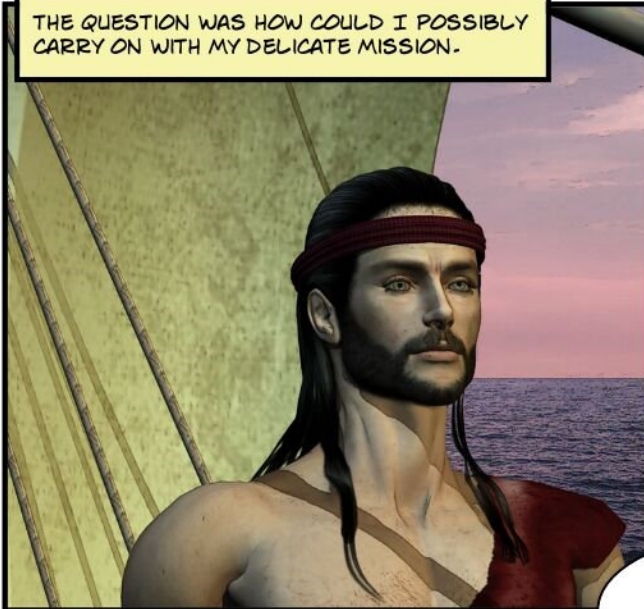
I COULD UNDERSTAND NOW WHAT HERA MEANT BY SAYING THAT PERSEPHONE WOULD BE TOUGH TO HANDLE. I WENT BACK TO THE SHIP, DEEP IN THOUGHT.



SO?...

SHE SAID THAT WE CAN STAY FOR A WHILE.

THE QUESTION WAS HOW COULD I POSSIBLY CARRY ON WITH MY DELICATE MISSION.



I WENT TO SLEEP EARLY THAT EVENING.



IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...



???

MY MISTRESS REQUESTS YOUR PRESENCE AT THE PALACE.



ONE LOOK AT PERSEPHONE AND I REALISED THAT SHE WAS IN THE SAME MOOD THAT CIRCE USED TO GET INTO WHEN SHE MADE USE OF HER STRONG DRUGS.



AH, THE "CRAFTY ONE"!...
COME... SIT... KEEP ME
COMPANY FOR AGAIN I CAN'T
SLEEP TONIGHT.





SHE OFFERED ME A DRINK.

TRY THIS STUFF... IT WILL SOOTHE YOUR MIND.

LIKE IT IS SOOTHING YOURS, MY LADY?

SHE THREW THE CUP AT ME.

STOP PATRONISING ME, YOU FILTHY LESS THAN NOTHING!



THEN PERHAPS I'D BETTER LEAVE.

DON'T YOU DARE!



TREAT ME THEN AS I AM TREATING YOU -WITH RESPECT.



RESPECT!!!... DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM, HUMAN SNAIL?

I AM PERSEPHONE, THE
GODDESS, QUEEN OF THE
UNDERWORLD!



RIGHT NOW ALL I
CAN SEE IS A VERY
UNHAPPY GIRL...



HOW DARE YOU?...



SUDDENLY SHE BROKE DOWN CRYING.

NOBODY LOVES
ME... NOBODY!



IT WAS A VERY UNEASY SITUATION.



HOW DARE YOU TO TOUCH ME, HUMAN?



SHUSH, LITTLE GIRL. CALM DOWN.



I HATE MEN! OH, HOW I HATE THEM!



I TOOK HER GENTLY IN MY ARMS. SHE DIDN'T RESIST.



IT'S ALL RIGHT, DEAR. I'M HOLDING YOU NOW.



I DON'T WANT TO BE HELD. I DESPISE YOU.

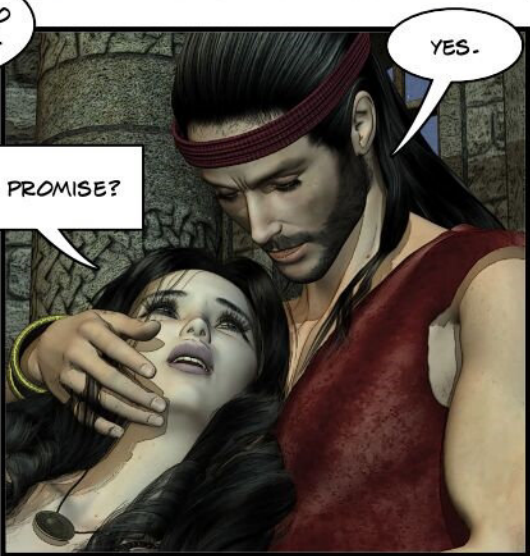
IT DOESN'T MATTER, LITTLE ONE. JUST CLOSE YOUR EYES AND GO TO SLEEP.



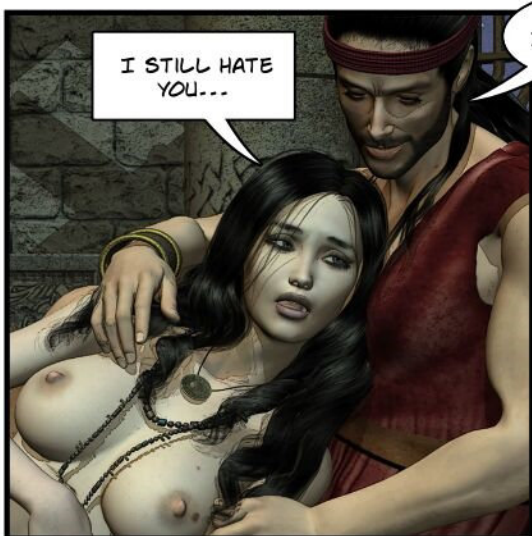
YOU WON'T GO AWAY?

NO, I'LL STAY TO WATCH OVER YOU.

YOU... PROMISE?



YES.



I STILL HATE YOU...

I KNOW.



BUT IT IS GOOD TO BE HELD LIKE THIS.

SHE FELL ASLEEP AND I SPENT THE REST OF THE NIGHT HOLDING HER IN MY ARMS, LIKE A CHILD...



...AND WONDERING HOW I SHOULD HANDLE THIS AWKWARD SITUATION.



I LEFT THE PALACE A LITTLE BEFORE SUNRISE, NOT WISHING TO EMBARRASS HER WHEN SHE WOULD WAKE UP.



ABOARD THE SHIP THEY WERE ALL STILL FAST ASLEEP.

I BATHED IN THE WARM SEA AND THEN SAT ON THE PIER AND TRIED TO PUT MY THOUGHTS IN ORDER.



ANOTHER SLEEPLESS NIGHT, MY KING?

YOU COULD SAY THAT... LISTEN, HAMON... GET THE SHIP READY TO SAIL... JUST IN CASE.



AT NOON I RECEIVED A SURPRISE VISIT.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME ALONG FOR A WALK?

I'D BE GLAD.



WE WALKED FOR A WHILE IN SILENCE.

LISTEN... ABOUT LAST NIGHT... DON'T GET ANY IDEAS...





YES. AND I SHOULD THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS.



BECAUSE YOU DESPISE ME. I KNOW, YOU TOLD ME.



YOU ARE A STRANGE MAN, ODYSSEUS. EITHER YOU ARE TOTALLY FEARLESS...

OR WEARY OF LIFE. I CAN'T FIGURE YOU OUT.





YET, UNLIKE ANY HUMAN THAT I HAVE KNOWN.



WHICH IS, I PRESUME, A GOOD THING.

IN A WAY IT IS. FOR YOU MADE MY MIND WORK AT FULL SPEED ONCE AGAIN.



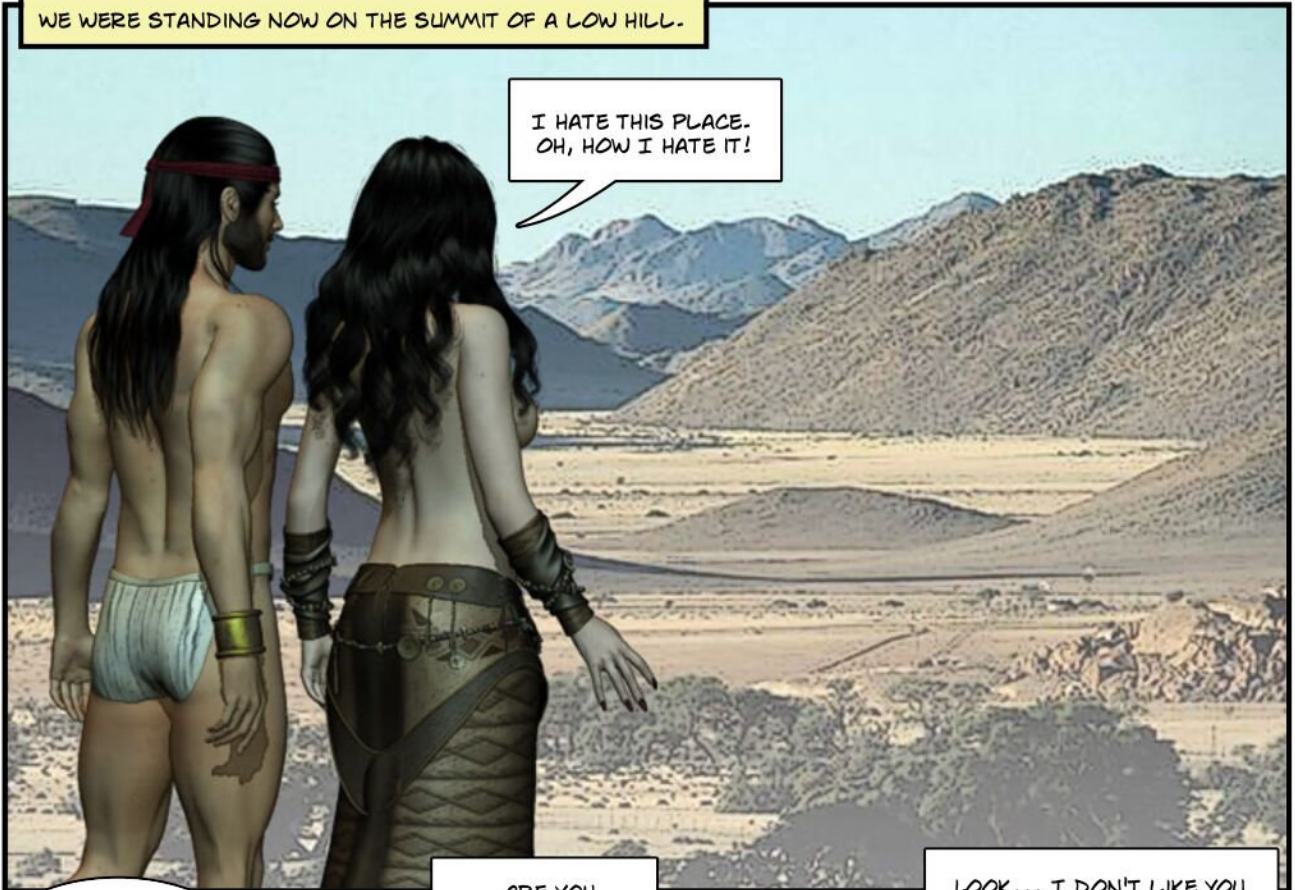
I'M GLAD.



AND... WILL YOU STOP PATRONISING ME? IT'S GETTING ON MY NERVES!



WE WERE STANDING NOW ON THE SUMMIT OF A LOW HILL.



I HATE THIS PLACE.
OH, HOW I HATE IT!



IS THERE ANYTHING YOU LOVE?

ARE YOU PATRONISING ME AGAIN?

I'M SORRY.

LOOK... I DON'T LIKE YOU AND I DON'T LIKE YOUR WAYS. BUT I NEED A FRIEND. WOULD YOU BE MY FRIEND?



YOU HAVE A STRANGE WAY TO ASK, BUT... YES, I SUPPOSE I COULD TRY TO BE YOUR FRIEND.

INSOLENT, ARROGANT HUMAN! ONE DAY I'LL LOSE MY TEMPER WITH YOU.



TILL THEN, LET'S BE FRIENDS.

SHE INVITED ME TO THE PALACE AGAIN THAT NIGHT. AND THIS TIME SHE WAS SHE WAS SOBER.

WOULD YOU HOLD ME AGAIN TONIGHT WHILE I SLEEP?

I'LL BE DELIGHTED, MY LADY.

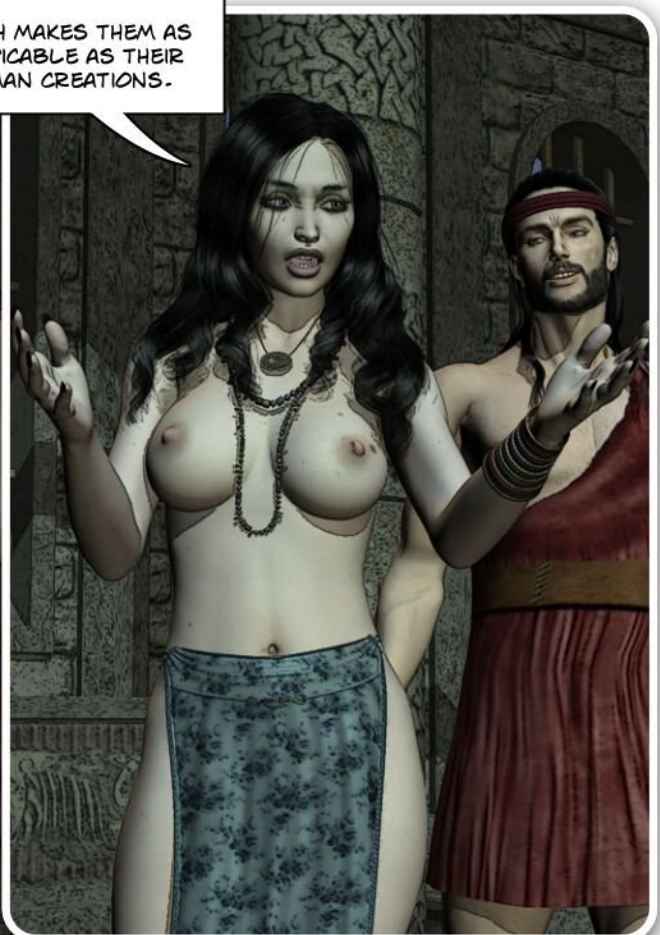


DON'T THINK THAT ANYTHING ELSE WILL HAPPEN. I TOLD YOU, I DESPISE MEN. AND I LOATHE THEIR FORNICATING HABITS.

WHICH MAKES THEM AS DESPICABLE AS THEIR HUMAN CREATIONS.



SOME TIMES EVEN GODS FORNICATE, MY LADY.





THUS, FOR A SECOND NIGHT IN A ROW, I HELD HER IN MY ARMS AND WE SLEPT LIKE TWO INNOCENT CHILDREN.



WITH THE DIFFERENCE THAT THIS TIME I DIDN'T HAVE TO SNEAK OUT AT FIRST DAYLIGHT.

OH, I SLEPT SO WELL! AND YOU?

SINCE WHEN ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THE COMFORT OF A LOATHSOME HUMAN?

I HEARD THE SOUND OF HER LAUGHTER FOR THE FIRST TIME.



YOU ARE TERRIBLE! YOU DON'T MISS A TRICK!

MAYBE THAT'S ONE OF THE REASONS YOU LIKE ME.



I DIDN'T SAY I DO...



YOU DON'T HAVE TO. I CAN FEEL IT.



YOU KNOW WHAT? I THINK THAT WE ARE GOING TO BE GOOD FRIENDS SOME DAY AFTER ALL.



FROM ODYSSEUS'
NOTEBOOK

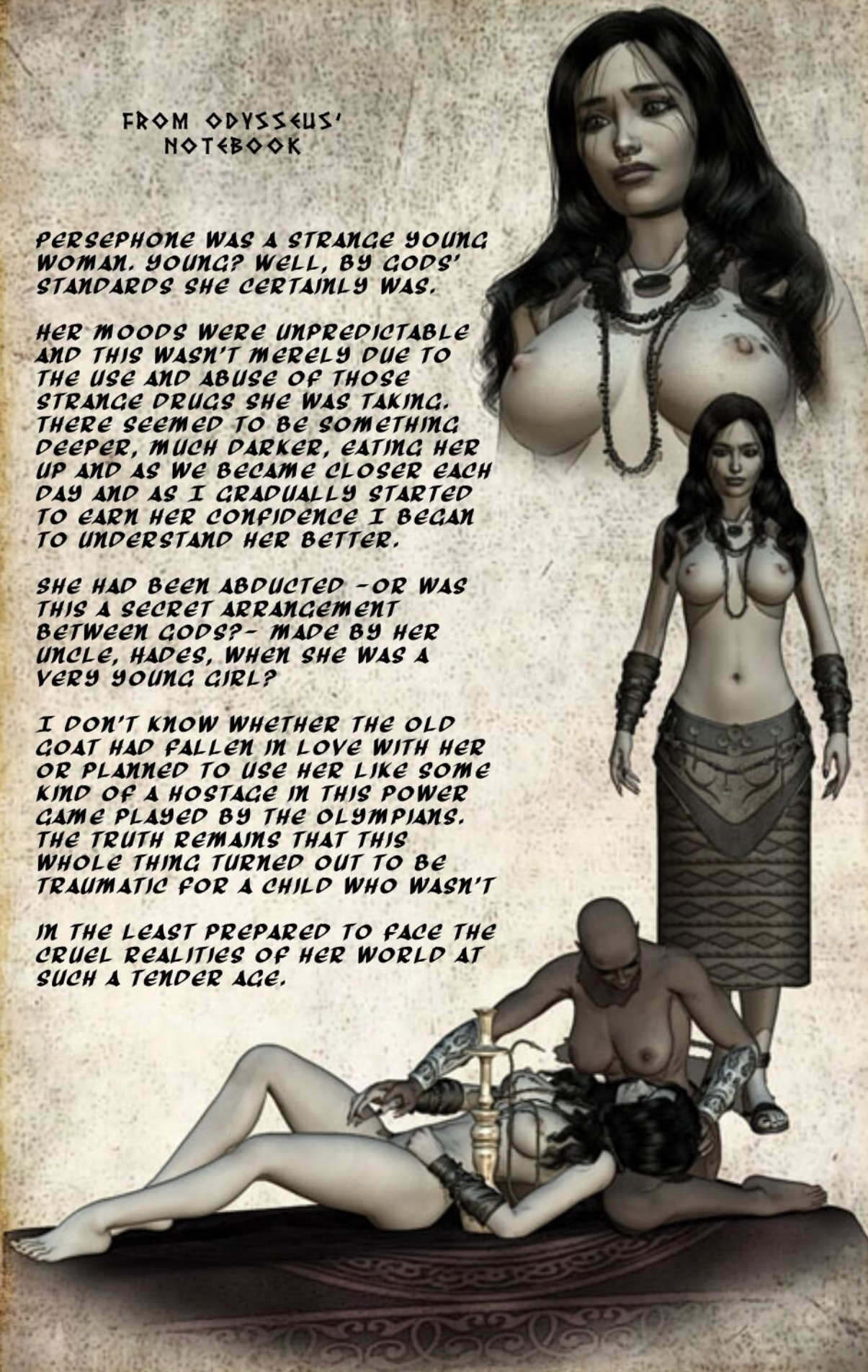
PERSEPHONE WAS A STRANGE YOUNG WOMAN. YOUNG? WELL, BY GODS' STANDARDS SHE CERTAINLY WAS.

HER MOODS WERE UNPREDICTABLE AND THIS WASN'T MERELY DUE TO THE USE AND ABUSE OF THOSE STRANGE DRUGS SHE WAS TAKING. THERE SEEMED TO BE SOMETHING DEEPER, MUCH DARKER, EATING HER UP AND AS WE BECAME CLOSER EACH DAY AND AS I GRADUALLY STARTED TO EARN HER CONFIDENCE I BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND HER BETTER.

SHE HAD BEEN ABDUCTED - OR WAS THIS A SECRET ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN GODS? - MADE BY HER UNCLE, HADES, WHEN SHE WAS A VERY YOUNG GIRL?

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THE OLD GOAT HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH HER OR PLANNED TO USE HER LIKE SOME KIND OF A HOSTAGE IN THIS POWER GAME PLAYED BY THE OLYMPIANS. THE TRUTH REMAINS THAT THIS WHOLE THING TURNED OUT TO BE TRAUMATIC FOR A CHILD WHO WASN'T

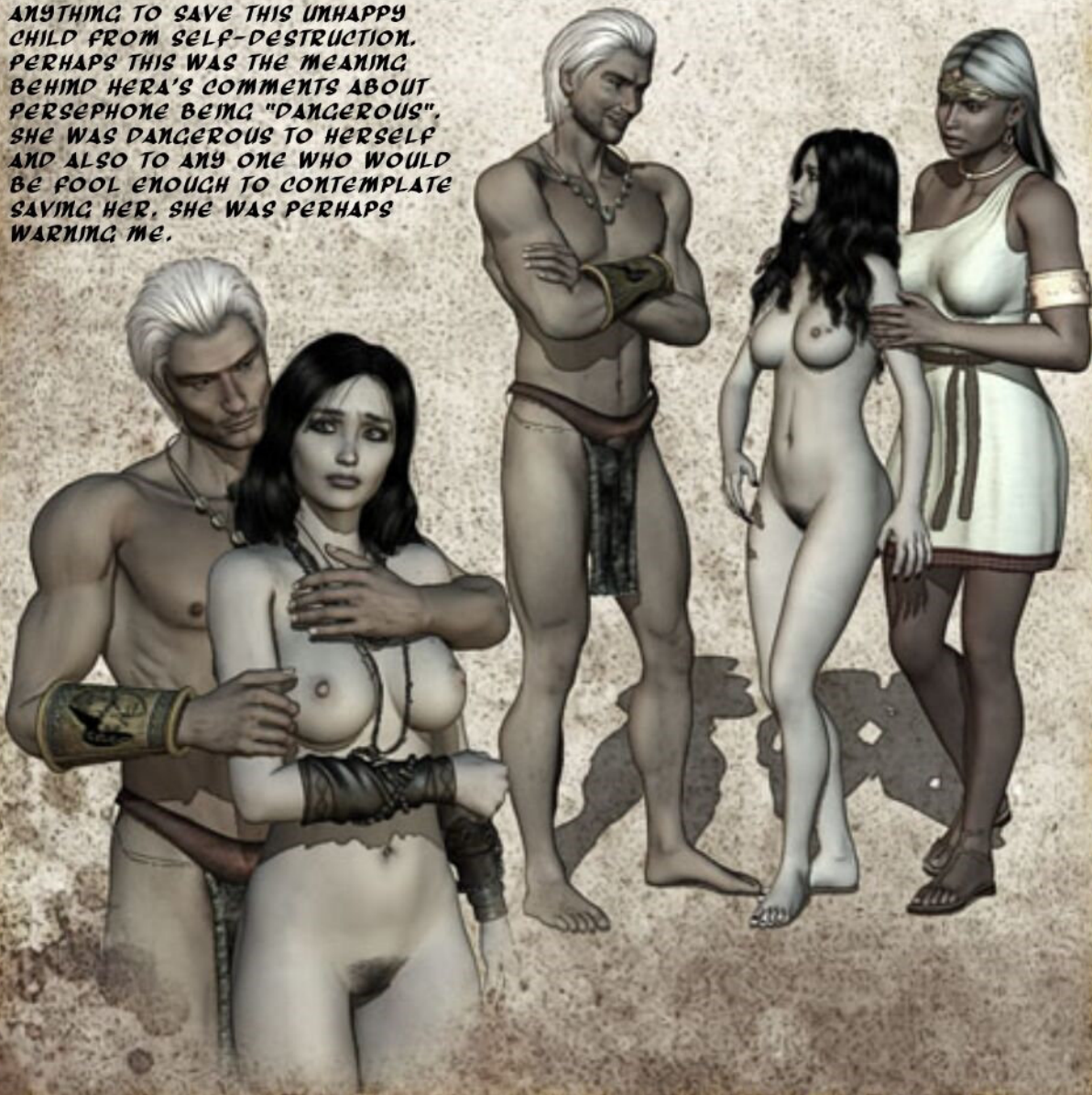
IN THE LEAST PREPARED TO FACE THE CRUEL REALITIES OF HER WORLD AT SUCH A TENDER AGE.



CONFINED IN THIS REMOTE AND DEPRESSING AREA, WITHOUT ANY CONTACT WITH HER KIN - WITH THE OCCASIONAL RARE VISIT FROM HER MOTHER - WITHOUT ANY FRIENDS AND WITH NO HOPE FOR A CHANGE IN HER SITUATION IN THE NEAR FUTURE, SHE HAD FALLEN VICTIM OF A DEEP MELANCHOLY, A KIND OF DARK DESPAIR, WHICH, WITH THE PASSING OF TIME HAD SHAPED HER CHARACTER, FILLING HER WITH HATRED FOR ANYTHING AND ANYONE WHO COULD STILL MOVE AND LIVE FREE IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD. AS SHE TOLD ME, I WAS THE FIRST PERSON SHE COULD TALK AND CONFIDE IN.

I KNEW BY THAT TIME ENOUGH ABOUT THE WAYS AND STRICT LAWS OF POWER BALANCE THAT GOVERN THE WORLD OF THESE BEINGS CALLED "GODS" TO REALISE THAT NEITHER I, NOR ANYONE ELSE COULD DO

ANYTHING TO SAVE THIS UNHAPPY CHILD FROM SELF-DESTRUCTION. PERHAPS THIS WAS THE MEANING BEHIND HERA'S COMMENTS ABOUT PERSEPHONE BEING "DANGEROUS". SHE WAS DANGEROUS TO HERSELF AND ALSO TO ANY ONE WHO WOULD BE FOOL ENOUGH TO CONTEMPLATE SAVING HER, SHE WAS PERHAPS WARNING ME.



WE SPENT OUR DAYS RIDING IN THE DESERT, WHICH, AS SHE TOLD ME, WAS THE RESULT OF A TERRIBLE WAR AMONG DIFFERENT FRACTIONS OF THE GODS IN THE OLDEN DAYS.



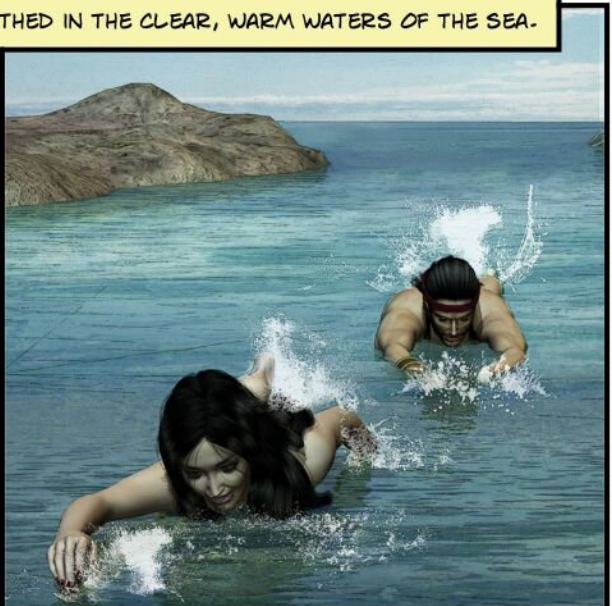
WE HUNTED WILD BEASTS...



WENT FISHING...



AND BATHED IN THE CLEAR, WARM WATERS OF THE SEA.



PERSEPHONE WAS AN EXCELLENT SWIMMER...



AND IT WAS A PLEASURE TO WATCH HER LITHE BODY MOVING UNDERWATER.

HER MOOD ALSO IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY.

TELL ME THAT I AM THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN YOU EVER SET EYES UPON.



IF YOU ARE NOT THE MOST BEAUTIFUL YOU CERTAINLY ARE THE MOST INTERESTING.







YES, SO AS TO GIVE ME THE PLEASURE TO TURN YOU DOWN.

WELL, IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

I SAID THIS FIRST.

IT'S TRUE. YOU DID.

AND I MEAN IT.



I KNOW YOU DO.



SO, IT IS SETTLED.

IT IS.

AND THUS WE CONTINUED TO SLEEP TOGETHER IN A CHASTE ARRANGEMENT.



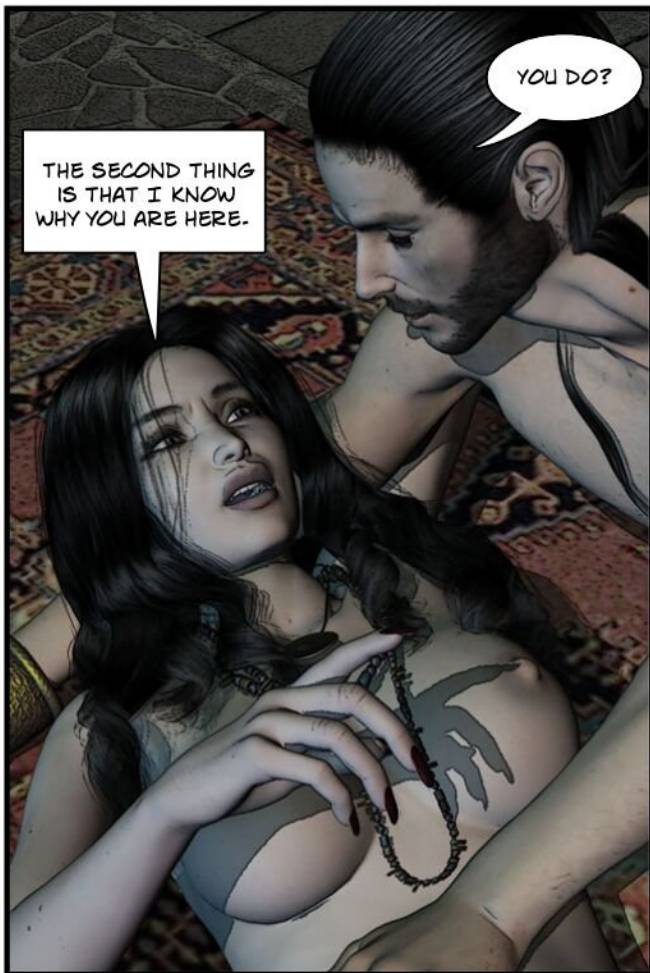
I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU. OR RATHER, TWO THINGS...

YES, LITTLE ONE?

THE FIRST IS THAT I'M BECOMING INCREASINGLY ACCUSTOMED TO... NO, DEPENDENT, ON YOUR COMPANY.



AND I FEEL THE SAME WAY.



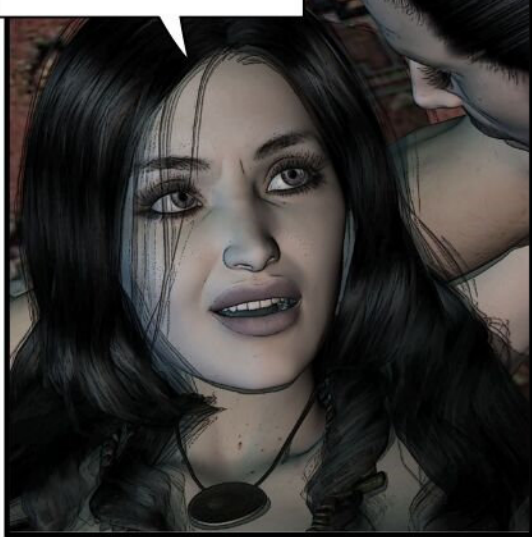
THE SECOND THING IS THAT I KNOW WHY YOU ARE HERE.

YOU DO?



DON'T BE ALARMED. I'M NOT STUPID.

A PERSON AS EXCEPTIONAL AS YOU, TURNING UP HERE... BY ACCIDENT! NOT LIKELY.

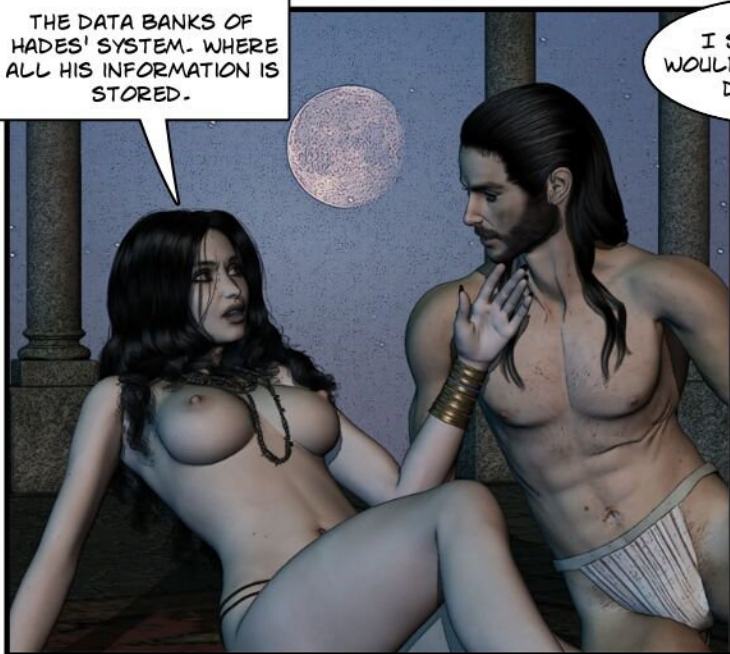


THEY SENT YOU HERE TO STEAL THE "ME'S", RIGHT?



THE... WHAT?!!!

THE DATA BANKS OF HADES' SYSTEM. WHERE ALL HIS INFORMATION IS STORED.



I SUPPOSE IT WOULD BE FUTILE TO DENY IT...



OH, DON'T WORRY. I COULDN'T CARE LESS, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. I LOATHE HADES AS MUCH AS I LOATHE THE REST OF THE OLYMPIAN BUNCH.

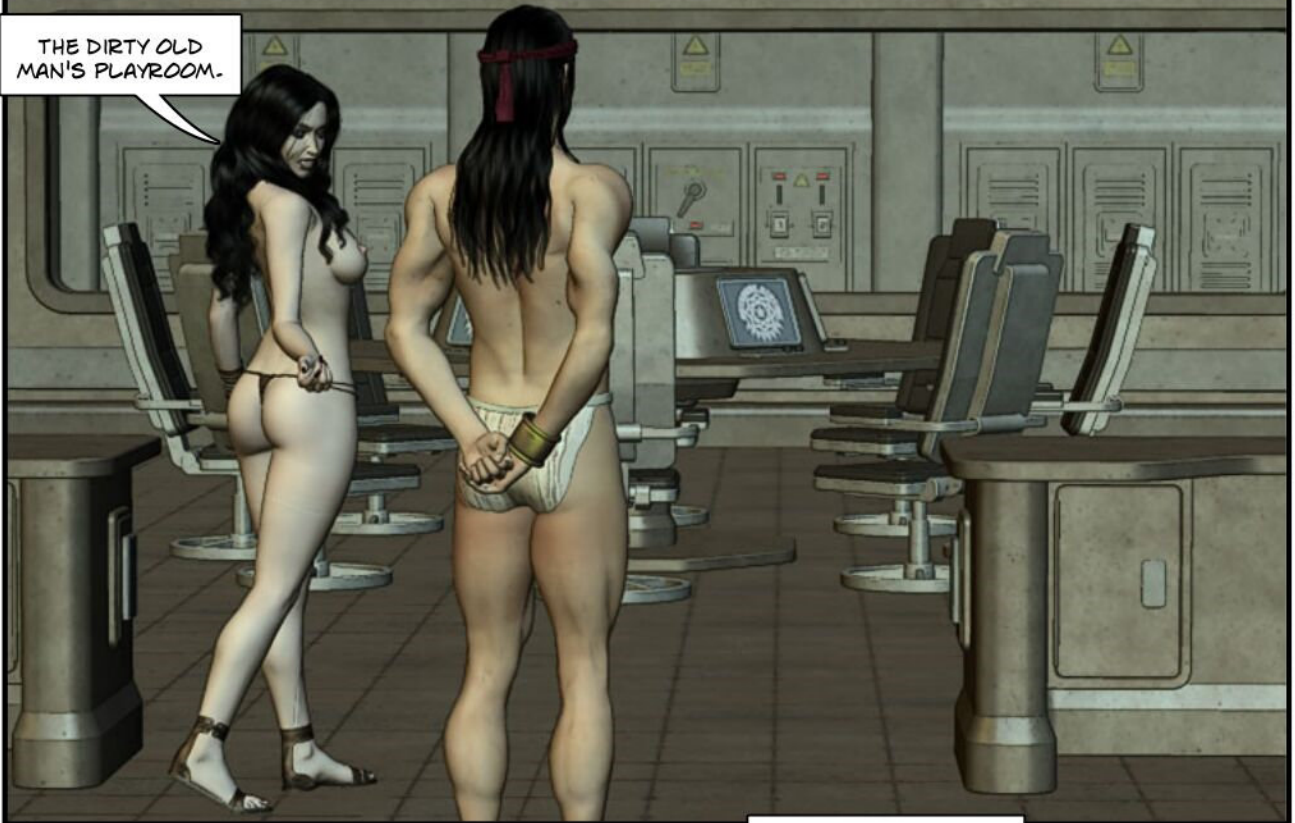


I'LL MAKE COPIES FOR YOU, IF YOU WANT ME TO. AND NOW, HOLD ME IN YOUR ARMS AND LET'S GET SOME SLEEP.



THE NEXT MORNING SHE TOOK ME TO A SUBTERRANEAN CHAMBER, NOT UNLIKE THE ONE I'D SEEN IN CYCLOPEA.

THE DIRTY OLD
MAN'S PLAYROOM.



SHE STARTED FIDDLING WITH A MOST STRANGE MACHINE.



HERE. EVERYTHING YOU
NEED IS IN THIS DISC.



I DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO SAY,
PERSEPHONE.



SAY NOTHING. JUST
PROMISE NEVER TO
FORGET ME.





I SHALL NEVER FORGET YOU, PERSEPHONE, AS LONG AS I LIVE.



AND I SHALL ALWAYS BE YOUR FRIEND.



IT WAS OUR FIRST AND LAST KISS....

WE SAILED THE NEXT DAY AND IT WAS WITH DEEP SADNESS THAT I WAVED GOODBYE TO THE LONELY FIGURE OF THE GIRL STANDING AT THE PIER.



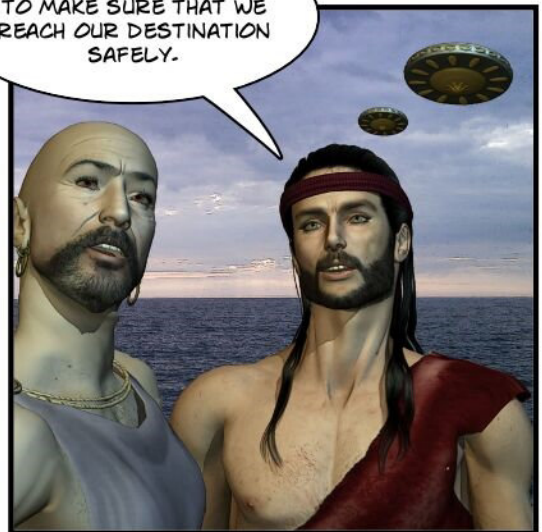
ON THE THIRD DAY OF OUR RETURN TRIP, AS WE MOVED OUT OF HADES' SPHERE OF INFLUENCE, THE OVERHEAD ACTIVITY OF THE GODS' FLYING SHIELDS RESUMED MORE FREQUENTLY THAN EVER.



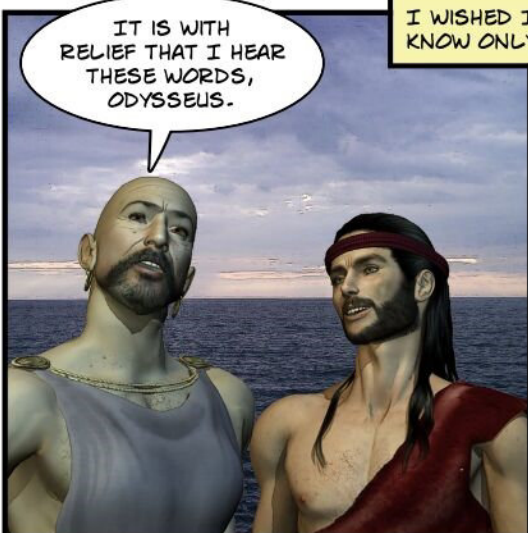
IT LOOKS AS IF THEY ARE WATCHING OVER US, MY KING.



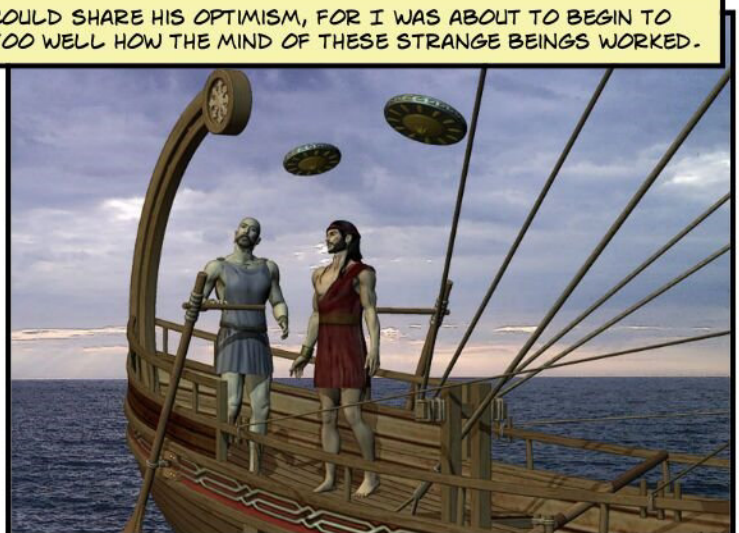
THEY ARE. THEY WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE REACH OUR DESTINATION SAFELY.



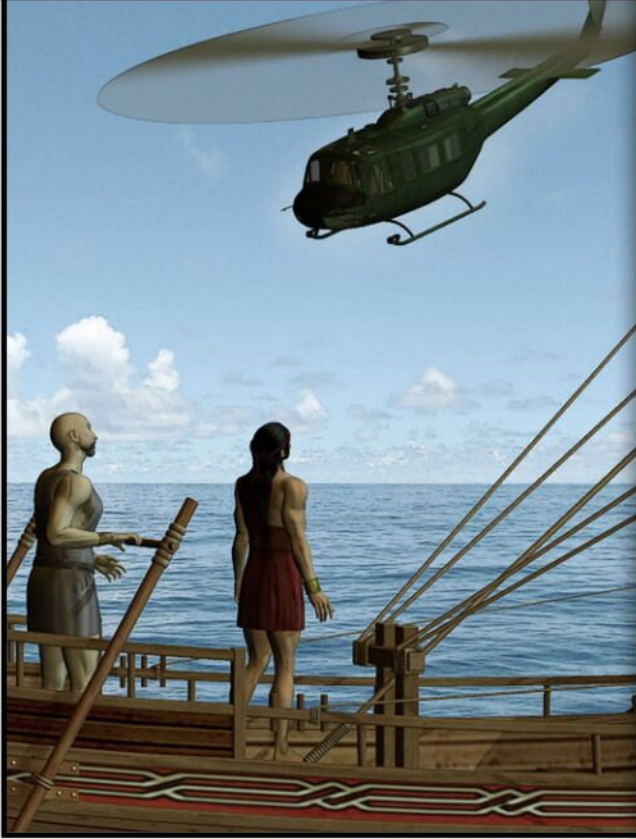
IT IS WITH RELIEF THAT I HEAR THESE WORDS, ODYSSEUS.



I WISHED I COULD SHARE HIS OPTIMISM, FOR I WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN TO KNOW ONLY TOO WELL HOW THE MIND OF THESE STRANGE BEINGS WORKED.



AT ABOUT MIDDAY OF THE FOURTH DAY OF OUR TRIP A NOISY CRAFT, OF A TYPE I'D SEEN USED BY THE GODS IN THE TROJAN WAR, LOWERED ITSELF ABOVE OUR MAST.



AND A FAMILIAR FIGURE CLIMBED DOWN A LONG ROPE.



SO, WE MEET AGAIN, ODYSSEUS.

WE MEET AGAIN, HERMES.





HAVE YOU DONE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN ASKED TO?

I HAVE.

LET ME SEE THE EVIDENCE.



I'LL ONLY SHOW IT TO THE ONE WHO COMMISSIONED ME.



DON'T BE STUPID, BOY. YOU KNOW WHO I AM AND WHAT I STAND FOR.

I KNOW NOTHING. I ONLY KNOW THAT I PROMISED TO DELIVER THE GOODS TO A SPECIFIC PERSON AND THIS PERSON ISN'T YOU.



BLOODY FOOL! I COULD GET THEM BY FORCE.

I WOULDN'T ADVISE YOU TO TRY FOR I'LL THROW EVERYTHING OVERBOARD BEFORE YOU LIFT A FINGER.



YOU ARE BLUFFING.

WOULD YOU TAKE THE RISK?



NEXT TIME WE MEET BE ON YOUR GUARD.

FAREWELL, HERMES. GIVE MY RESPECTS TO YOUR MISTRESS.

HAMON WAS HORRIFIED.



ARE YOU MAD?
WHAT WAS ALL
THAT?

THAT WAS OUR
INSURANCE, HAMON.
OUR SAFE PASSAGE
BACK TO CIRCE'S
ISLAND.



YOU MADE HIM
MAD! WHAT KIND OF
LOGIC IS THIS?



HAD I GIVEN HIM WHAT
HE WANTED THEY'D
DROPPED US LIKE
A HOT POTATO.



NOW THEY ARE
GOING TO WATCH OVER
US NIGHT AND DAY UNTIL
WE REACH OUR PORT
SAFELY.

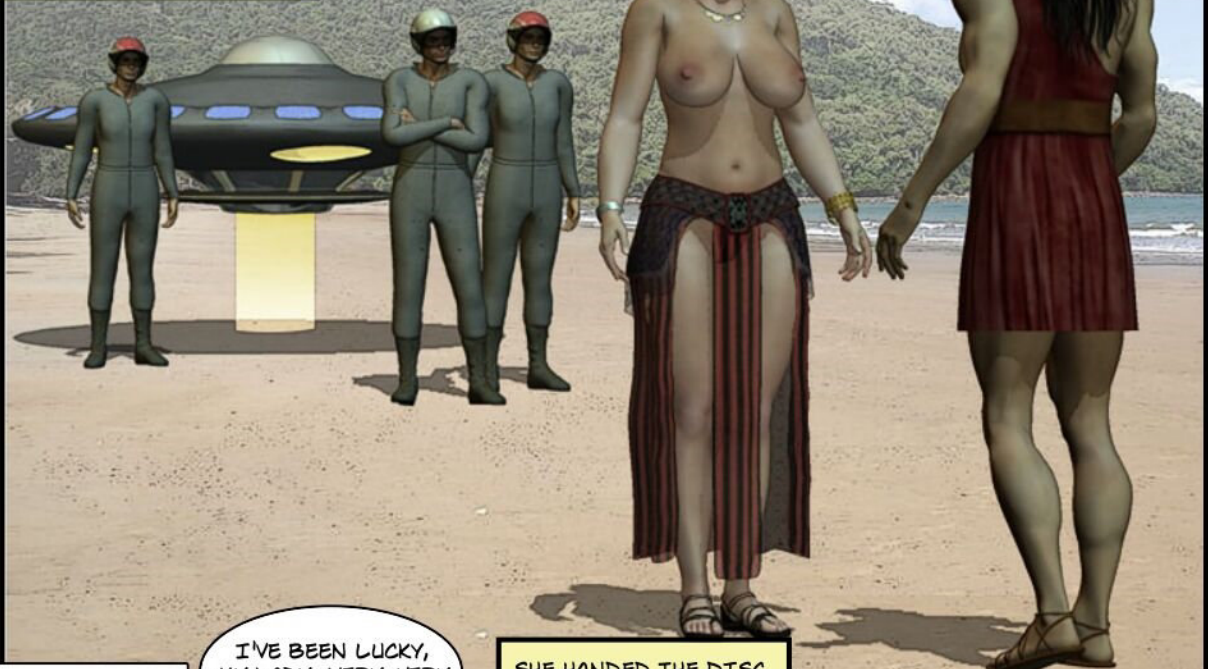


I HOPE YOU ARE
RIGHT, ODYSSEUS.
OH, HOW I HOPE YOU
ARE RIGHT!

I WAS RIGHT. WE SAILED BACK TO CIRCE'S ISLAND WITH FULL AERIAL ESCORT AND WHEN I SET FOOT ON LAND AGAIN THE QUEEN OF THE GODS WAS THE FIRST PERSON TO GREET ME.

SO, YOU MADE IT, ODYSSEUS!

I DID, MY QUEEN.



I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! HOW DID YOU MANAGE?

I'VE BEEN LUCKY, MY LADY. VERY, VERY LUCKY.

SHE HANDED THE DISC OVER TO ONE OF HER SERVANTS WHO WENT INSIDE THE CRAFT TO CHECK IT OUT. MINUTES LATER HE CAME BACK TO REPORT THAT EVERYTHING THEY NEEDED WAS THERE.

WHAT CAN I SAY, MY BOY! YOU HAVE MY ADMIRATION. TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH I DIDN'T BELIEVE YOU'D SUCCEED.



DID YOU EMPLOY ANY OF YOUR RUSES WITH THE DARK ONE?

NO, MY LADY. THERE WAS NO NEED.

YOU SEDUCED HER THEN? TELL ME, I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING.

SHE JUST HAPPENED TO BE NEEDING A FRIEND, MY LADY. AND SO DID I.



MANY HOURS LATER, IN THE PRIVACY OF THE ROOM THAT CIRCE PROVIDED TO HER DISTINGUISHED GUEST...

IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN, MY BOY! HAVEN'T YOU BEEN WITH A WOMAN SINCE WE LAST MET?

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, MY LADY, I HAVEN'T.

YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT NOTHING HAPPENED BETWEEN THAT GLOOMY LITTLE BITCH AND YOURSELF?

NOTHING PHYSICAL, MY LADY. IF THAT IS WHAT YOU ARE ASKING ME.



I DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOU SAID THAT SHE HANDED YOU OVER THE SHEMS WILLINGLY. YOU DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO USE CIRCE'S MIND CONTROL POTION. WHY WOULD SHE DO SUCH A THING?



FOR TWO REASONS. THE FIRST IS THAT SHE WANTED TO HELP A FRIEND IN TROUBLE -ME. THE SECOND, BECAUSE, AS SHE SAID, SHE DIDN'T CARE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER FOR YOUR QUARRELS.



SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN WEIRD THAT GIRL.



BUT THEN SO ARE YOU. ARE YOU SURE THAT YOUR MOTHER DIDN'T HAVE A GO WITH ONE OF US?

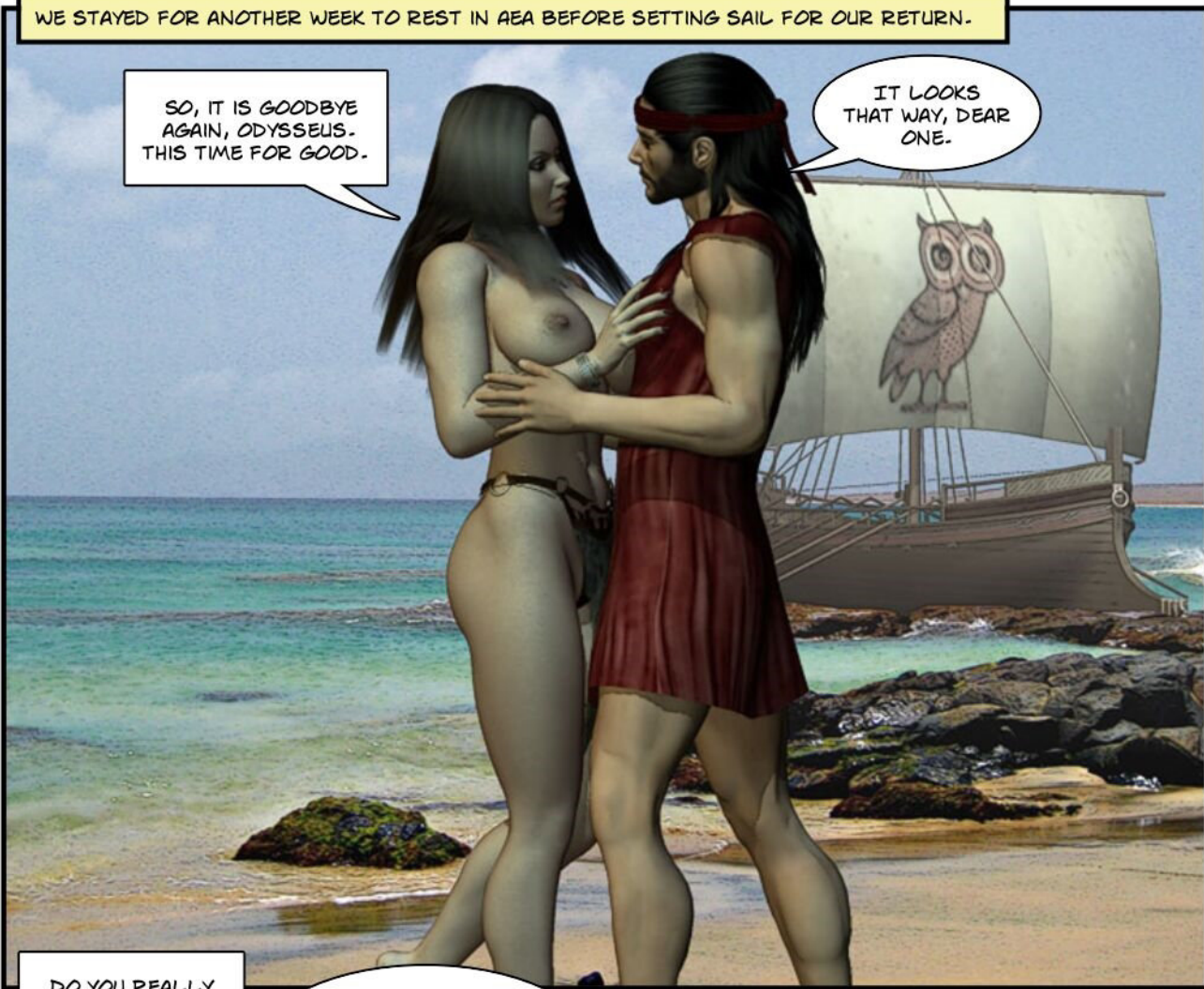


SOME TIMES I WONDER MYSELF, MY LADY. SOME TIMES I WONDER.

WE STAYED FOR ANOTHER WEEK TO REST IN AEA BEFORE SETTING SAIL FOR OUR RETURN.

SO, IT IS GOODBYE AGAIN, ODYSSEUS. THIS TIME FOR GOOD.

IT LOOKS THAT WAY, DEAR ONE.



DO YOU REALLY WANT TO LEAVE? YOU DON'T HAVE TO, YOU KNOW...

IT'S NOT ABOUT ME, MY DEAR. BUT I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR MY MEN AND THEY DESPERATELY WANT TO GO BACK HOME.

YES, I UNDERSTAND.



AND SO THERE WAS YET ANOTHER LONELY FIGURE STANDING IN THE BAY AND WAVING GOODBYE AS OUR SHIP TURNED TO CATCH THE WIND THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY LEAD US BACK, TO A MORE LOGICAL AND FAR MORE SUITABLE FOR HUMANS WORLD.



END OF BOOK 7



